

5th ADA Soldiers participate in annual Army All-American Bowl

By Capt. Michael Greenberger

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Soldiers from the Battery D, 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment participated in the 6th annual U.S. Army All-American Bowl, which was held at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas in January.

Led by 1st Lt. Edmund Guy, Staff Sgt. William Winham, Sgt. David Irby, Sgt. Rory Keating, Spc. Adam Butt and Pfc. Class Michael Kawa, and Sgt. Ulises Matias and Spc. Ryan Connelly from Battery B, 4-5 ADA, traveled to south Texas to showcase the Avenger weapon system at the premier Army football event.

Since 2001, the U.S. Army has sponsored the "Super Bowl" of high school football by bringing the nation's top athletes together to compete in what amounts to a massive recruiting event. The All-American Bowl has been hosted at the Alamodome since 2002, where attendance was at 17,000 spectators. This year, the number of spectators to the nationally televised game shot to more than 45,000.

The 2006 All-American Bowl proved to be a special event when invitations were sent to the players, family members and VIPs, as well as Soldiers from all over the country to be honored as Heroes.

From Fort Hood's 1st Cavalry Division, six soldiers were nominated by their respective chains-of-command to travel to San Antonio to take the field with players before the game and serve as a shining example of the sacrifice, dedication, and commitment present in the Army. Sgt. Joshua Shick, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment; Staff Sgt. Ronald Stoutamire, 2nd Battalion, 15th Service Regiment; Sgt. Ruben Patterson, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment; Spc. Everett Heuer, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion; Sgt. Juan Valdez, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, and Sgt. Matthew Hartman, 2-5 Cav., participated in the week-long fanfare associated with the All-American Bowl.

Soldiers arrived in San Antonio on a Wednesday to a welcome ceremony at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in San Antonio where, amid a cheering crowd, San Antonio City Councilman Richard Perez and San Antonio USO president Ray Holmes spoke to the almost 80 Soldiers about their service and sacrifice.

The following day, Soldiers were treated to a tour of San Antonio's Missions and historic River-walk, and later that evening, the Soldiers attended an invitation-only barbecue dinner on the Alamodome field, where they ate with the All-American players and assorted VIPs. Guest speakers at the event included coaches Herman Boone and Bill Yoast, famous for their leadership of the 1971 T.C. Williams Titans 13-0 season, showcased in the 2000 Disney film, "Remember the Titans."

"I think it is a humbling experience, being honored like this," Shick said, while he ate with # 11 All-American West, Jai Eugene.

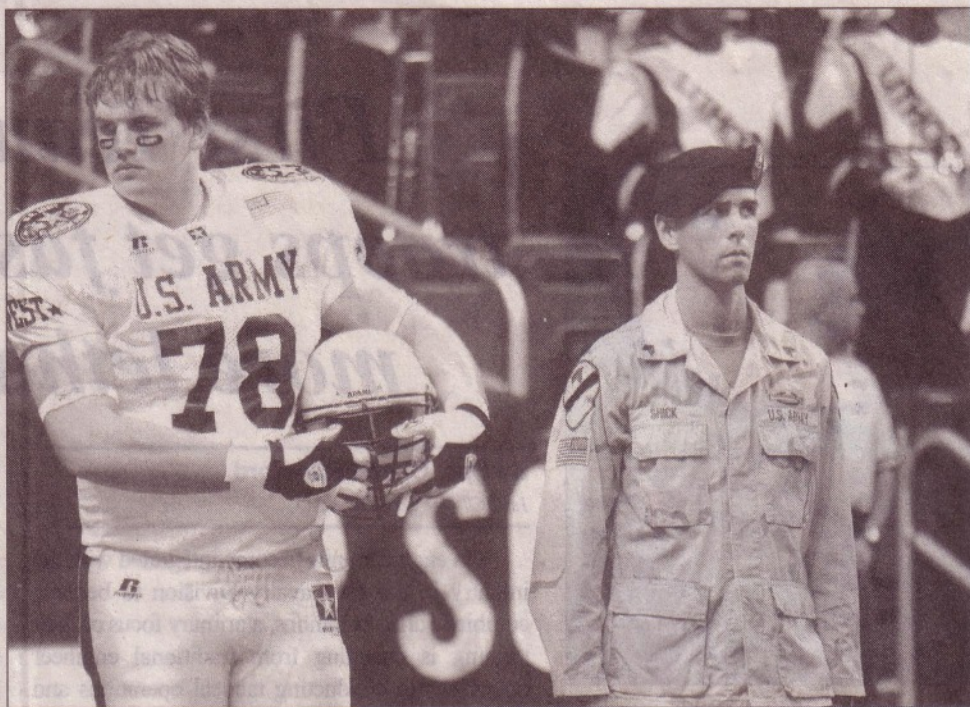


Photo by Capt. Michael Greenberger, 3rd Sig. Bde. PAO

Sgt. Joshua Shick, Co. A, 3-8 Cav. stands on the sideline with Bartley Webb of the All American West team during the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in January.

"It is amazing that we can come together, and so many people from so many different walks of life could come together, right here on this field."

"What the Army is doing here is a great thing," Stoutamire said. "It is an honor to be here meeting these kids."

After posing for a photo with #17 All-American West Sergio Kindle, Kindle remarked that this experience was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity he had to take advantage of. Kindle said he plans to get to the NFL someday after studying communications and playing football for University of Texas at Austin.

The "Hero" Soldiers donned their dress green uniforms Friday to attend a VIP reception and formal dinner which celebrated and honored those who support those who serve by presenting awards to military family members, veterans and others who support Soldiers around the world. VIPs included coaches Boone and Yoast and other members of the original 1971 Titans team and staff.

For the Soldiers, game-day began with continuous rehearsals of the chain of events. The day officially began with a ceremony in which about 100 new recruits took their oaths of service on the field. The "Hero" Soldiers took the field matched with a player, celebrating and illustrating that football and the Army shares their core values.

Meanwhile, outside the Alamodome, the Soldiers from 4-5 ADA established their Avenger weapon system in a static display as part of an interactive learning experience for patrons of the event.

"We had a great time and helped the Army with its recruiting mission," stated Guy, "The Soldiers spent many hours in preparation for the game: cleaning, rehearsing and ensuring that all aspects of their assignment were perfect. Countless people, both military and civilian, stopped by with questions about the Avengers' specifications, capabilities and limitations."

Following a breathtaking rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" as performed by the U.S. Army Field Band from Fort Meade, Md., the official game ball was delivered by a Soldier from the U.S. Army Air Assault School, who slid "Aussie"-style down ropes from the Alamodome roof in a display of skill and pyrotechnics. The game ball delivered, kick-off soon followed.

Throughout the game, players officially chose and announced the colleges they will attend and play football for on national television, while in the stands, Soldiers attending AIT at Fort Sam Houston looked on, enjoying a break from their training.

High school bands played in a special section at the far end of the arena, entertaining the many spectators. Cheerleaders from around the country assembled to participate in pumping the crowd up for their East and West teams. Volunteers and uniformed personnel of every rank, service and purpose roamed the stadium participating in the culmination of months of work to bring the 2006 All-American Bowl to this point.

At the end of the fourth quarter, East stood victorious with a score of 27-16.

The All-American Bowl allows the country to see the best of the best in high school football, while also showcasing the outstanding academic accomplishments of these fine athletes. While some go on to serve in the U.S. Army, some are drafted into the National Football League. In 2005, 12 players out of 78 from the 2001 All-American Bowl were drafted into the NFL after graduating from their respective colleges.

Selection for the All-American Bowl begins in the springtime. Athletes across the country are evaluated based on athletic ability, academic record, community relations and future plans. Of about 4,000 nominees interviewed, only 400 are considered for selection. The 400 is pared to the 78 top players invited to participate in the East vs. West showdown in Texas.